
The Wrong Invitation

PEKING — (UPI) — The invitations to President Nixon's banquet for Premier Chou En-lai were printed in the style and idiom of the Nationalist Chinese, not the Communist Chinese.

The characters on the invitation were arranged from top to bottom — a style in common use now only in Taiwan, the island headquarters of Nationalist Premier Chiang Kai-shek. In Peking, the characters are arranged from left to right, English-style.

Some of the phrasing also was archaic — now in vogue only on Taiwan.

The invitations were prepared in Washington, U.S. officials said, where translators have more contact with Taiwan than mainland China.

White House spokesman said the Chinese protocol officers had told them that although the style was old-fashioned, it was correct. They said that Chairman Mao Tse-tung had written poems in that style.

Foreign newsmen based in Peking said some Chinese were upset by the protocol error, others laughed.

An American official observed, "that's what happens when you have 20 years without contact between people."
